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ELIE NADELMAN (1882-1946):  
HIS HELLENIC INFLUENCE: 1900-1920

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The subject of any work of art is for me nothing but a pretext for creating a significant form, relations of forms, which create a new life that has nothing to do with life in nature, a life from which art is born and from which spring style and unity.<sup>1</sup>

Elie Nadelman was in love with style. It is the central fact of his life and his art.

He was the seventh child of a jeweler, Philip Nadelman, and his wife, Hannah Arnstam, born in February, 1882, in Warsaw, Polish Russia. His mother's family included artists, writers, and musicians.

Not many facts remain of Nadelman's earliest years; his house of birth and most of his early records were destroyed in World War II.

As well, little of his youthful work remains, with the exception of a full sketchbook of pencil drawings and some notations in ink, done most likely as a student in Warsaw's Gymnasium and High School of Liberal Arts, which he attended from about 1887-1899, and a brief enrollment in the Warsaw Art Academy in 1899, and before his tenure in the Imperial Russian Army.

These earliest examples of Nadelman's artistic mood include tight, accomplished drawings of family life--a mother sewing, a sleeping father, a sister at the piano, farm animals, peasants, and notations for setting stones in finger rings.<sup>2</sup>

From 1900-01, while a volunteer for the Imperial Russian Army, as an officer's candidate, Nadelman taught drawing and flute to children of officers, often decorating the officers' mess hall with his own drawings, many of which were sold.

Hoping to become an artist, and not just a craftsman alone, like his father, Nadelman became aware of reproductions of the statues of Rodin, whom he admired as being the greatest bronze master since the Renaissance. Nadelman also made small compositions in pen and ink, romantically Rodinesque, of entwined, struggling, or loving figures. Other drawings recall work from Gustave Dore, as well as the contemporary mystical decorator and illustrator, Wrubl.<sup>3</sup>

In 1901, he returned to the Warsaw Art Academy for one year, and in 1902, he went to Cracow to seek out a group of progressive artists under the title of Sztuka (Art), related in spirit to the Muscovite Mir Iskoustvo (World of Art).<sup>4</sup> Like the Russians, the Poles were represented by an art review bearing the name of their movement which conducted competitions to discover hidden talent. Sztuka served as the representative for Polish Impressionism, but even more for an aggressive cultural nationalism glorifying Poland as the Messiah of European Liberty in her past and present grandeur.<sup>5</sup> In this magazine, Nadelman achieved his first recognition for a prize-winning project submitted for a memorial to Frederic Chopin. Even then, it was recognized as a sculptor's design, rather than that of a painter.

Nadelman had gone to Cracow in order to seek out more artistic freedom. The city at that time was under Hapsburg



rule. Also, Nadelman was trying to escape the moribund State Academy in Warsaw, which was suffering from half a century of anecdotal nationalism. Nadelman was also attracted to Cracow in hopes of attending the classes of Konstantin Lacska, Sztuka's meagre representative of Rodin.<sup>6</sup>

Nadelman left Cracow abruptly after only two days, in spite of its ancient university, its active theater, and its journalism, which enjoyed contact with the comparative liberalism of Vienna. Nadelman realized it was only a dilution of greater tendencies in western art. He was also disappointed in the director of the Cracow Academy, Julian Falat, a meek Impressionist landscape painter and water-colorist, who from 1895 had directed the academy after the deaths of "epic" nationalist painters, Matejko and Rodakowski.<sup>7</sup>

In 1904, Nadelman found his way to Munich, feeling nearer the source of contemporary activity. Here, he found musical theater, opera, and variety, and also the circus, the only modern expressions that pleased him. Local painters and sculptors offered little more assistance than those in Cracow and Warsaw. Nadelman's major interest in Munich was the Glyptothek, with its great collection of Classical sculpture, ranging from the Aegina pediments and fragments that had been restored by Thorwaldsen, to the Barberini Faun. The impact of the Athenian carving on Nadelman, who before had only witnessed inade-

quate reproductions, was unforgettable.

Here was first stated for him what would become his personal standard: the Classical figure, having the impassive, implacable archetype, serene essence of the divinely humane, uncorrupted by personality or violence, ordered even in anger, rational, contained, realized in the marble to such a degree of finality that one is only impressed by the gods depicted, and thoughtless of the hands that released them from their stone. He would always hold Greece as his most important, if partial, criterion. Throughout his life he would maintain his philosophical preoccupation with the antique ideal.<sup>8</sup>

Around the turn of the century, while the young Nadelman was in Munich, the studies of Theodore Lips' relation of optics to geometry and Endell's ideas towards an organic psychological aesthetic were popular and frequently discussed by students and critics. There was an intense romantic devotion to the Hellenistic ideal that had graduated into scientific or pseudo-scientific rationalization of beauty as observable measure. Nadelman, being aware of this activity, was also knowledgeable of the local contemporary sculptor, Adolf von Hildebrand, author of Das Problem Der Form.<sup>9</sup>

Later, when he could afford it, the young Nadelman began to collect many studies of Classical sculpture, mostly in the form of detailed catalogues of specific museums, particu-

larly terra cottas; his primary concern being that of posture and adornment. Proportion meant less to him than finding his own preferred scale.

His debt to the Greek ideal became more an attraction to the plastic significance of a few key poses, gestures and balanced movements, rather than abstract laws, deducted or revived. On later occasions he consulted museum curators, but found slight assistance from them. His problems of the Greek ideal were more of a metaphysical sense, rather than that of a technical or historical sort.

He avoided stylization for its decorative or rhetorical sake, but when he generalized, it was not towards slickness, but towards the heart of the form which dictated his volumes. Like the Greeks, classic or orthodox, he was more absorbed by epitome than by personality.

Later in Nadelman's life, when speaking of the heart of form and the dictation of volumes, he stated:

The ultimate quality of painting and sculpture is plasticity. The sculptor goes on to give an interesting interpretation of plastic life. Matter has an individual will which is its life. A stone will refuse all the positions we wish to give it if these are unsuited to it. By its own will, it will fall back into the position that its shape, in conjunction with its mass, demands. It is this will of matter expressed in shapes and volume that I call plasticity.<sup>10</sup>

Nadelman's intelligent and instinctive method of find-

ing form in the undifferentiated mass was clearly evident. He was muscularly assertive, intellectually arrogant, and a demonstrated innovator early in the progressive contemporary movement. He was continually discountenanced, particularly by those critics who fought in retrospect the first battles of Cubism. Nadelman's proposals were confused with those of "dynamic symmetry".<sup>11</sup> Nadelman was more captivated by wit and intrinsic dandyism in the human body's trim, than by any abstract charting of it by mathematical formula.

After he had made his decision on the nature of form and volume, he had found his means of discovery and invention of several modes of graphic and plastic rendering. Placement of formal relations and the establishment of mass were as simple to him as handicraft. He had a seeming genius for the appropriate scale of heads and figures. He was an intellectual, not an academic, a logician rather than an aesthetician. His work derived from observation of exterior reality, not from subjective, ingenious formula.<sup>12</sup>

Nadelman never associated himself with manifestos or movements, seldom entering group shows. It has been easy to confuse Nadelman with the Cubists. His analysis of form and volume did actually precede any of the first demonstrations of what came to be called Cubism, as early as 1907, but he kept officially apart from the group and was recognized as being in-

imical to it by colleagues such as Guillaume Apollinaire and Albert Guezes, who were among Cubism's earliest apologists.

He was unaffected by the Cubist painterly-like notions of the maintenance of planes on a flat surface, or the decomposition of the objective image. While the Cubists occupied themselves with purely formal questions, Nadelman never did. He felt their studies were haphazard and their extension was dependent upon the accidental exploitation of several personalities.<sup>13</sup>

Nadelman's researches were logical and classical, based upon virtual annihilation of individuality towards expression of lyric essence. He proceeded directly from graphic proposition to plastic thesis. He analyzed the human body and realized it was to be kept human. He carved his analysis without confusion or experiment from a strict observation of nature into an intelligent lively anatomy.<sup>14</sup>

After six months in Munich, Nadelman left, headed for Paris, which would determine his particular direction. Arriving there late in the year of 1904, he took a studio in a courtyard behind 14 Avenue du Maine, off the Rue de Vaugirard. After the Glyptothek, there was the Louvre where he made drawings after Michelangelo sculptures. After von Hildebrand, the German artist, there was Rodin himself, who enjoyed Olympian prestige, yet whose greatest works like Bourgeois de Calais,

or the Balzac, were hardly acceptable in his lifetime.<sup>15</sup>

Hence, Nadelman, being unattached to either academy or master, found his source of models in the Classical collections of the Louvre and local museums. Briefly, after first arriving in Paris, he drew from short poses at the Atelier Colarossi, with no critique. His attendance was merely an inexpensive method of sharing a living model. Here, he perfected his ability to capture the salient characteristics of the body.<sup>16</sup> At this time, having no work in which he had complete confidence, Nadelman came to have serious doubts concerning his own vocation. After 1913, except for portraits, he used no model.

For six months he immured himself in his narrow studio off the Rue de Vaugirard, trying to discover if indeed he did wish to devote himself to the problems of sculpture; if it were necessary to be a sculptor of the twentieth century.

During this time he became familiar with the writings of Baudelaire, whose poems became a second Bible for him, and whose prose read like a eulogy to his own philosophy:

In all great epics, sculpture is supplementary. At the beginning, and at the end, it is an isolated art.<sup>17</sup>

Although Nadelman felt alone at this time, he did have the support of the Parisian Polish colony, and was also hailed as an illustrated member of Sztuka since 1904. He was also protected by the Polish brothers, Thadee and Alexandre Natan-

son, editors of La Revue Blanche, and patrons of Post-Impressionism. At the end of his initial six months of seclusion, he faced the essential fact that he did, after all, wish to devote himself to sculpture.

After this crucial six month period, Nadelman, for six years, began practicing his theories of the relationships of forms and volumes, pursuing them in drawing and plaster researches, using the living bodies of himself and of a woman companion as his models, and thereby relying less often on the Louvre.

He began exhibiting some of his analytical drawings in 1906 in the Salon d' Automne, and in 1907 at Weill Gallery in the Rue Victor Massé. The only titles Nadelman gave to these drawings were Rapports des Formes, or Recherches de Volumes.<sup>18</sup>

A closer examination of two sculptures and a drawing done during this period (1904-1906) gives a clear suggestion of Nadelman's Hellenic influence. In comparison, the similarities between Nadelman's Praying Figure (Fig. 1) of 1904 and the Hellenic bronze of a Praying Boy (Fig. 2) by Boidas, son of Lysippos, executed in the fourth century, B.C., become apparent. The Nadelman figure expresses the same upward glance and lifted shoulders as is exhibited in the Boidas sculpture. There is no doubt the arms are raised in worship in both works. The arms and hands are certainly differentiated in their move-

ments, as are the legs and feet. The long legs, slender body and small head of Nadelman's figure also agree with the proportions passed down by Lysippos to his son. In both figures the upward movement has been emphasized by the raised arms. The only basic differentiation between the figures is that of media; Nadelman working in plaster and Boidas working in bronze, and also the different gender of the two figures.

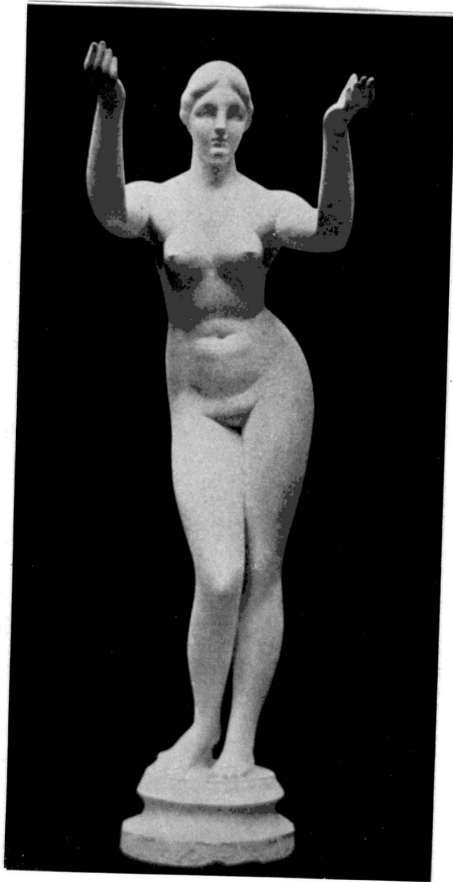


Fig. 1  
NADELMAN, Praying Figure,  
1904, Plaster.

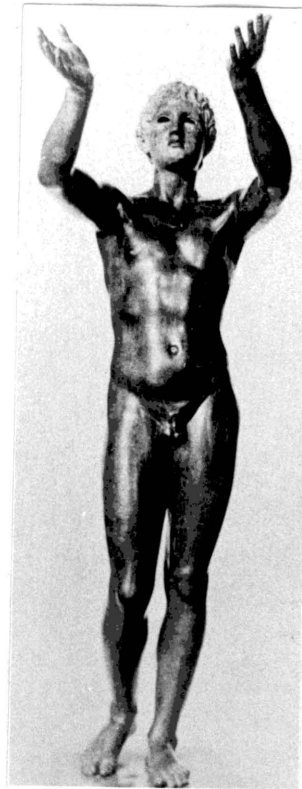


Fig. 2  
BOIDAS, Praying Boy,  
ca. Fourth Century, B.C.,  
Bronze.



Another example of Nadelman's Hellenic input emerges in a bronze sculpture, Standing Female Nude (Fig. 3), of 1907, and a pencil, pen and ink drawing of Standing Female Nude (Fig. 4), done about 1906. Both works show similarities in pose and stance comparable to the Medici Aphrodite (Fig. 5), a Hellenic work derived from Praxiteles during the fourth century, B.C., or perhaps the Capitoline Aphrodite (Fig. 6), attributed to followers of Praxitelian style, also of the fourth century, B.C.



Fig. 3  
NADELMAN, Standing Female  
Nude, 1907, Bronze.



Fig. 4  
NADELMAN, Standing Female  
Nude, 1906, Pencil, Pen  
and Ink Drawing.

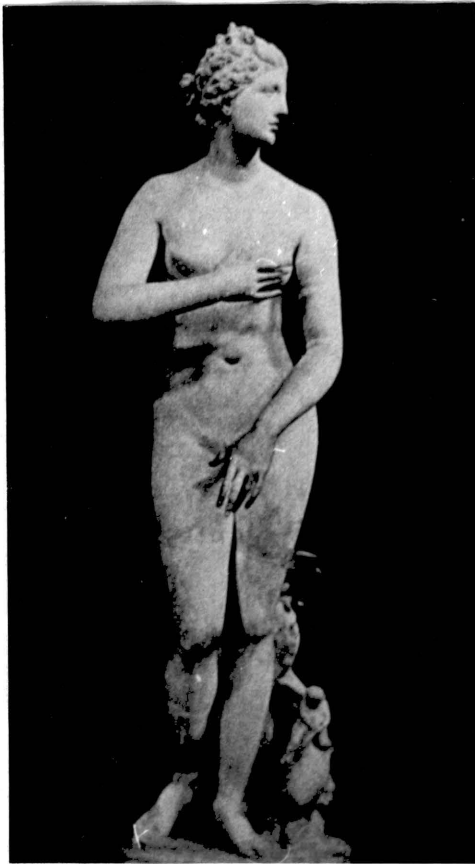


Fig. 5  
PRAXITELES, Medici Aphrodite,  
c. Fourth Century, B.C.,  
Marble.



Fig. 6  
PRAXITELIAN STYLE, Capitoline  
Aphrodite, Fourth Century,  
B.C., Marble.

Nadelman's Female Nude, plus the drawing, reflect the same slouch in stance, the same weight of the figure being set upon the left leg. Nadelman has referred to the same shielding of the body by the hands, the right hand protecting the breast, and the left hand hiding the pubic area, in a very conscious gesture to repeat the modesty exhibited by Hellenistic

predecessors.

The heads of all the figures, both Nadelman's and the Greek examples, look coquettishly to the left side. The pose in the Nadelman drawing (Fig. 4), which was perhaps a preliminary to the sculpture (Fig. 3), is merely reverse in position of the arms and legs, but still holds the same modest gesture as is found in Figures 3, 5 and 6.

While the Cubists directed their energies between cafe discussion and studio experiment, attempting to develop an aesthetic of purely abstracted form, Nadelman, alone and in opposition, observed only the essential nature--logic of the human head and human body, in order to erect free-standing figures of modern symbolic, but idealized, realism released in space. They are also naked, as had been the preoccupation of sculptors of the ancient epochs.

Unlike the Cubists, who were chiefly interested in aesthetics, Nadelman was both psychologist and moral philosopher. His researches enabled him to find unique means for incarnating so cerebral a symbol.<sup>20</sup>

In 1908, after becoming associated with collector-critic, Leo Stein, Gertrude Stein's brother, Nadelman was introduced to Picasso, during a late summer visit of Stein and Picasso to his studio. Picasso saw in Nadelman's studio the Head of Man (Fig. 7), of 1907, a plaster bust which he did not

fully understand, but from which, as so happened many times in Picasso's voracious career, he appropriated stylistic mannerisms, which are evident in Picasso's Bronze Head (Fig. 8) of 1909.<sup>21</sup>



Fig. 7  
NADELMAN, Head of Man,  
ca. 1907, Plaster.



Fig. 8  
PICASSO, Bronze Head, 1909,  
Bronze.

Nadelman's Head, now lost, and Picasso's Head are both demonstrations of emphatic planes and curved, edged forms based upon the structural knowledge of the head. Nadelman's Head, however, repeats a more normal anatomy of the skull; the distortion is neither accidental or expressionist, nor is it Cubist as in Picasso's, but it accentuates the underlying geometry of the skull.<sup>22</sup>

From this visit, Stein bought a number of drawings from Nadelman, as well as the three-dimensional Standing Female Nude (Fig. 3) which at that time was in plaster.

Later in Nadelman's career a manuscript, published at his own expense during 1932 through E. Weyhe of New York, bore the following inscription by Nadelman concerning his opinion of his influence upon Cubism:

These drawings made sixteen years ago (1905), have completely revolutionized the art of our time. They introduced into painting and sculpture abstract form, until then wholly lacking. Cubism was only an imitation of the abstract form of these drawings and did not attain their plastic significance. Their influence will continue to be felt more profoundly in the future.<sup>23</sup>

In 1909, Nadelman's efforts led to his first one-man show, which opened at Galerie Druet in Paris on April 25-26.<sup>24</sup> The exhibition enjoyed the most excitement of any sculpture event since the Rodin exhibition at Pont de L'Alma during the International Exhibition of 1900.

The Druet Exhibition contained some twenty-five pieces of sculpture, twenty-six drawings, and five relief plaquettes.<sup>25</sup> They demonstrated Nadelman's output of the previous five years. The work represented an amazing range of styles from realistic torsos and pre-Cubistic fragmented busts, to drawings and sculptures of cool and smooth classicizing nudes and heads.<sup>26</sup>

The work demonstrated a daring modernity and such an original personality that it shook the young artists of Paris. Its repercussions soon became visible in the work of such future masters as Picasso, Brancusi, Modigliani, Archipenko and Lipschitz. Matisse represented the upheaval sufficiently by posting a sign on his studio wall: "Defense de parler de Nadelman ici."<sup>27</sup>

After a vacation near the town of Dieppe, France, Nadelman returned to Paris, moved to a larger studio at 15 Rue de Boissonade, and began work upon a series of carved female heads.

In 1910, the magazine Camera Work<sup>28</sup> published a statement by Nadelman defining his concept of abstraction in terms of "significant form". It read:

But what is this true form of art? It is significant and abstract, composed of geometrical elements. Here is how I realize it. I employ no other line than the curve, which possesses freshness and force. I compose these curves so as to bring them into accord or into opposition to one another. In that way I obtain the life of form, harmony . . . The subject of any work is for me nothing but a pretext for

creating significant forms, relations of forms which create a new life that has nothing to do with life in nature.<sup>29</sup>

This was the first time that the term "significant form" was used in modern art (before Clive Bell made it popular).

The year, 1911, brought more exhibitions for Nadelman. Presentations of his work were made in Berlin and in Barcelona, where he exhibited with Caramuel Manolo Hugue. While in Barcelona, Nadelman witnessed the bullfights. Enroute, he stopped in France to view the prehistoric cave paintings of Les Eyzies (Dordogne). They were to influence later sculptures and drawings of bulls done in 1915.

Nineteen-eleven also saw Nadelman's second one-man show in April of that year at Paterson's Gallery in London. In the London exhibition Nadelman presented, among other works, ten of his more recent marble sculptures of female busts. Viewing these busts, Nadelman's debt to Classical Hellenic sculpture emerges once again and clearly represents the intrigue of the Classical in Nadelman's oeuvre.

Similarities between Nadelman's Ideal Head (Figs 9 and 10) of 1910 (present in the London exhibit), and The Head of Athena (Fig. 11) from the Metope of the Golden Apples at the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (approximately 500 B.C.), again exhibit Nadelman's penchant for Classicism. Both the modern and the antique heads present Classical features which are calm,

thoughtful and passionless. He has utilized the same stylization of hair pattern and use of a smooth skull as is found in The Athena Head. Nadelman's head also utilizes the almond eye and continuation of line through the profile of the forehead and nose. Both heads offer sweet and softly modeled faces, as well as elongated proportions and a graceful combination of elegance and exaggeration. In spite of their kinships, Nadelman's Head is so burdened with sophistication and extravagance

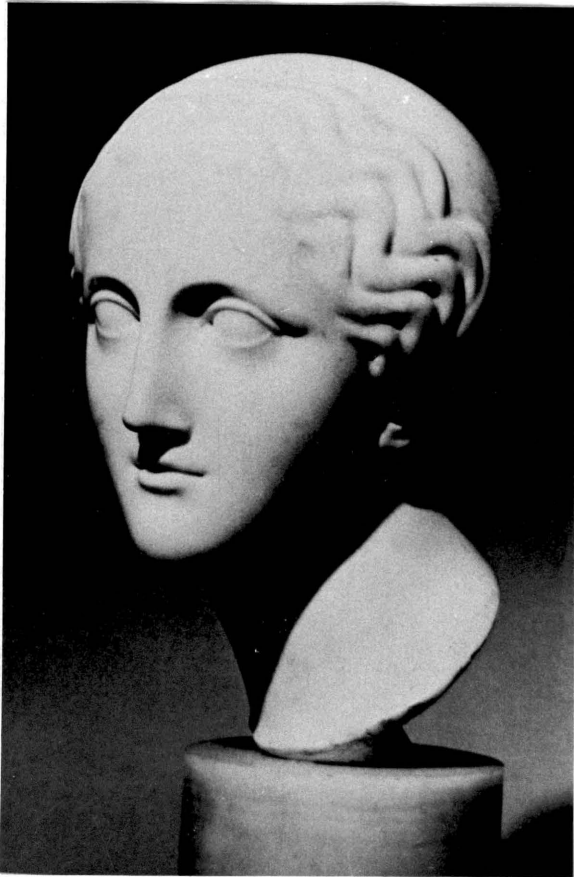


Fig. 9  
NADELMAN, Ideal Head, 1910,  
Marble.

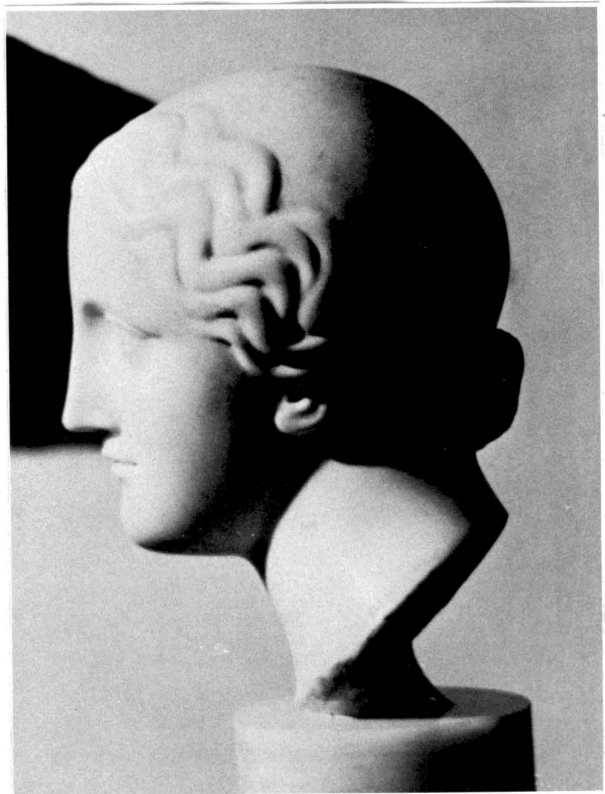


Fig. 10  
NADELMAN, Ideal Head, 1910,  
Marble.



that he often revolted true lovers of antique Greek sculpture. It must be remembered, however, that Nadelman used antiquity only as a pretext; he borrowed its vocabulary to create a new language which fit his own message.<sup>30</sup>

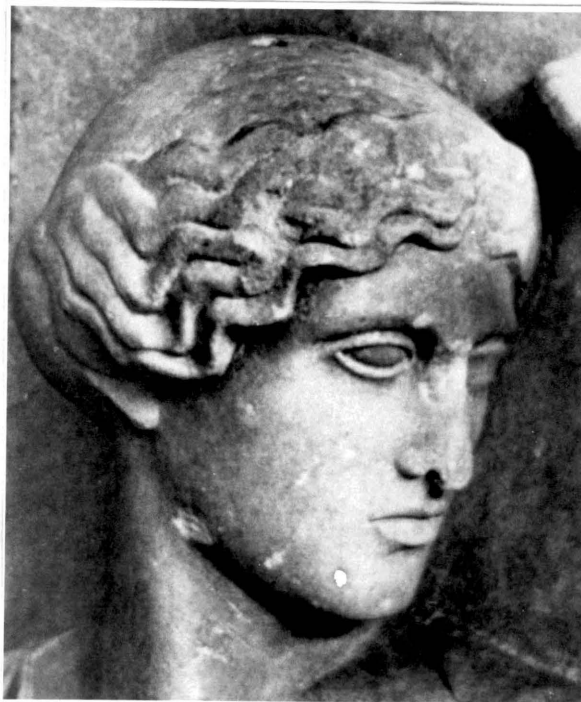


Fig. 11  
 TEMPLE OF ZEUS AT OLYMPIA,  
Head of Athena, ca. 500 B.C.,  
 Marble.

At this point in his career, Nadelman had not only discovered the mechanics and surface forms of Greek sculpture, but had established laws of plastic construction in his marbles, highly polished as in antiquity. He united a rational science of proportion with a refined elegance of form in which he as-

simulated the Hellenistic formulae.

Nadelman's London exhibition also caused a great sensation in the European art world. Into Paterson's Gallery walked Madame Helene Rubinstein, later Princess Gourielli-Tchkonia, a sympathetic collector. She did not acquire merely one or two of the some fifteen marble heads; she purchased the entire exhibit outright, including a plaster version of Nadelman's Horse (Fig. 12), a reclining polished bronze nude, and a Head of Mercury (Fig. 13).<sup>31</sup>



Fig. 12  
NADELMAN, Horse, 1909,  
Plaster.



Fig. 13  
NADELMAN, Head of Mercury,  
1910, Marble.

Madame Rubinstein immediately placed Nadelman's work in her beauty establishments in London, Paris, Boston, New York and Buenos Aires. His work, in its delicacy, became her trademark, or logo, for the scientific beautification of modern woman. Nadelman was responsible for a style of rendering L'Art de Decoratif Moderne, taken over and popularized in Madame Rubinstein's advertising, which became the next step in decorative art after L'Art Nouveau of 1900, and which was powerful in the world taste through the Paris Exposition of 1925.<sup>32</sup>

Classical Figure (Fig. 14) of 1911, exhibits Nadelman's concern for the draped female nude, an aspect that he would utilize more frequently in the future. When placed against the Aphrodite (Fig. 15) of 100 B.C., by Apollonios of Tralles, Hellenic characteristics once again arise. The Nadelman figure has utilized stylized and patterned hair, as is found in the antique figure, along with the downcast, slightly turned head, and the wrap-around, physically active, encompassing drapery. The thickly massed folds falling from the center of the figure over the advancing leg and hanging down the outside is strikingly similar to the work by Apollonios. Nadelman has also utilized the fragmented aspect of the antique to fit his own needs of compact form and volume.

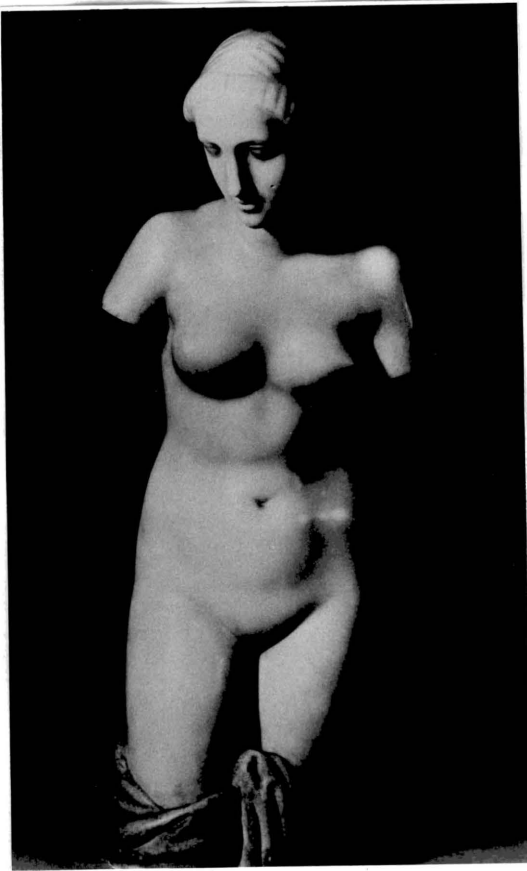


Fig. 14  
NADELMAN, Classical Figure,  
1911, Marble.

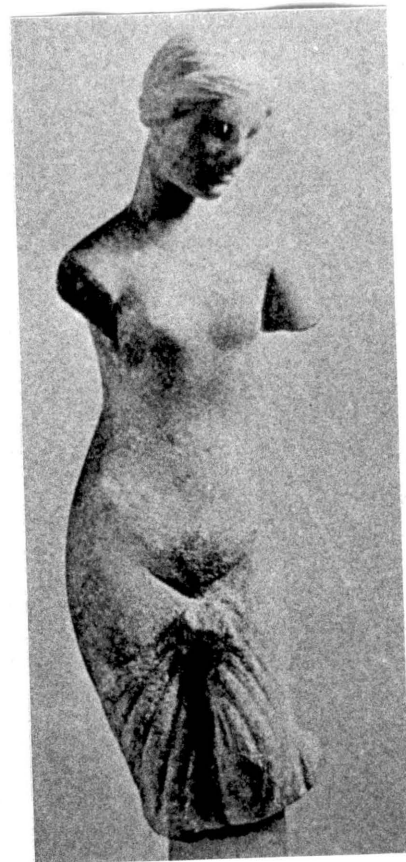


Fig. 15  
APOLLONIOS OF TRALLES,  
Aphrodite, ca. 100 B.C.,  
Marble.

In 1912, the Italian Marinetti's lecture on Futurism at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery caused excitement when Nadelman took issue with Marinetti's denunciations of the art of the past. Nadelman asserted: "M. Marinetti declares he will abolish all the arts of the past. He shows he does not in the least comprehend the nature of the art of the past." Marinetti jumped

from the podium and slapped Nadelman, which precipitated a free-for-all. The discussion was adjourned to nearby cafes.<sup>33</sup>

In January of 1913, Nadelman exhibited at a non-jury salon in Berlin, in which some of his works were picked up by German collectors. February of that year saw the American art historian, collector and painter, Walter Pach, along with Arthur B. Davies, select twelve drawings and the Head of Man (Fig. 7) of 1907 for the Armory Show to be held in New York. This event was evidence that a thoughtful and innovative sculptor was at work.

Nadelman held his second exhibition at the Gallery Druet in Paris in June of 1913. It was not as large as the 1909 exhibition, nor did it create the same sensation. A statement in a supplement of the Gazette des Beaux Arts observed:

M. Elie Nadelman is clever in noting the essential in physiognomy, in endowing the female face with sweetness, and in combining his taste for the archaic with the trembling nervousness of nature. He stylizes his attitudes in order to express their roundness, dominated by his willful fantasy, in all human gesture . . . .<sup>34</sup>

In 1914, the Vers L'Unite' Plastique, published in Paris, reproduced a portfolio of about fifty Nadelman drawings. In March, the first serious article on Nadelman, written by Andre Solomon, was published in L'Art Decoratif.<sup>35</sup> Solomon, who had been somewhat critical of Nadelman, wrote a soberly sympathetic article and a guarded introduction:

A great number of his admirers take him for a precious young master--almost Byzantine, although all of his work tends towards a unity, a great plastic whole. Neither, although it is often said of him, is he a sterile imitator of the Greeks. Nadelman is above all a theorist, a theorist in spite of himself . . . Let us not forget that Nadelman sacrificed everything to the relations of volumes a long time before the Cubists.<sup>36</sup>

After 1914, Nadelman became concerned with simplified depiction of contemporary social types, and also became preoccupied with the passing scene of fashion and high society. He spent the summer of 1914 near Ostend, in Belgium.

The outbreak of World War I caught him unexpectedly and he went at once to the Russian Embassy in Brussels to offer himself as a reservist in the Russian army. The consul informed him that it was useless to attempt to cross Europe. The German army had already begun advancing. Nadelman was then able to reach London through the help and generosity of Madame Rubinstein, who then arranged his passage to New York. Sailing on the Lusitania, with most of the contents of his Paris studio, he arrived in New York on October 31, 1914.<sup>37</sup> Upon his arrival, Madame Rubinstein put her garage in Rye, New York, at his disposal for storage purposes, and also to enable him to prepare for his first New York show.

Nadelman soon took a New York studio on West 14th Street and began making contacts with Americans such as Stieglitz, Davies and Pach; the latter had earlier known of Nadelman through

the Armory Show.

His first active assistance came from Martin Birnbaum, a connoisseur, critic, and junior partner at Scott & Fowles, art dealers. They had heard of Nadelman in Paris from the Natanson brothers. Birnbaum insisted upon visiting the walk-up studio of Nadelman; upon viewing the work he felt it was a revelation in sculpture. Birnbaum began making arrangements for an exhibition, and also began preparing an article on Nadelman that appeared in International Studio in 1915.<sup>38</sup> Birnbaum also introduced Nadelman to Mrs. Radeke of Providence, Rhode Island, who presented a marble head of Nadelman's to the Rhode Island School of Design, the first American museum to own a Nadelman sculpture.<sup>39</sup>

In the meantime, Nadelman had made arrangements for a small exhibition at Alfred Stieglitz' Photo Session Gallery, "291", in December of 1915. Here, Nadelman showed the first plaster version of Man in the Open Air (Fig. 16), a culmination of his new development and a turn towards his very different style that was to evidence itself in the years to come. But Hellenism still ruled; the pose of the figure and its relationship to the tree trunk, were a kind of whispered echo of the Bronze Statue of Demetrius I (Fig. 17).

In the next six years, Nadelman was to be included in the permanent collections of Brooklyn, Detroit, Cleveland, Wor-

cester, the Corcoran in Washington, D.C., and the Carnegie in Pittsburgh--a distinct accolade.



Fig. 16  
NADELMAN, Man in the Open  
Air, 1915, Bronze.



Fig. 17  
Bronze Statue of Demetrius I,  
ca. Fourth Century, B.C.,  
Bronze.

The year, 1915, saw Nadelman's work being influenced by his past visits to Barcelona (1911) where he attended the bull-fights, and to southwestern France, where he viewed the prehistoric cave paintings of the Dordogne, evidenced in his sculpture and drawings of bulls and deer in which the prehistoric



influence becomes apparent. The comparison of a prehistoric drawing of a bison, from a cavern in southern France (Fig. 18), and the Nadelman drawing of a cow (Fig. 19) of 1914, show the contemporary artist's distinctive use of the small hooves in contrast to the huge body, to evoke a sense of lightness to the form. The prehistoric artist, never being aware of overall compositional aspects, had great impact on Nadelman's research. The drawing of the prehistoric cow is very closely related to the sculpture of Bulls (Fig. 20) done in 1915. The same broadness of form in the body is offset by the light, delicate hooves of the animal in ink examples.

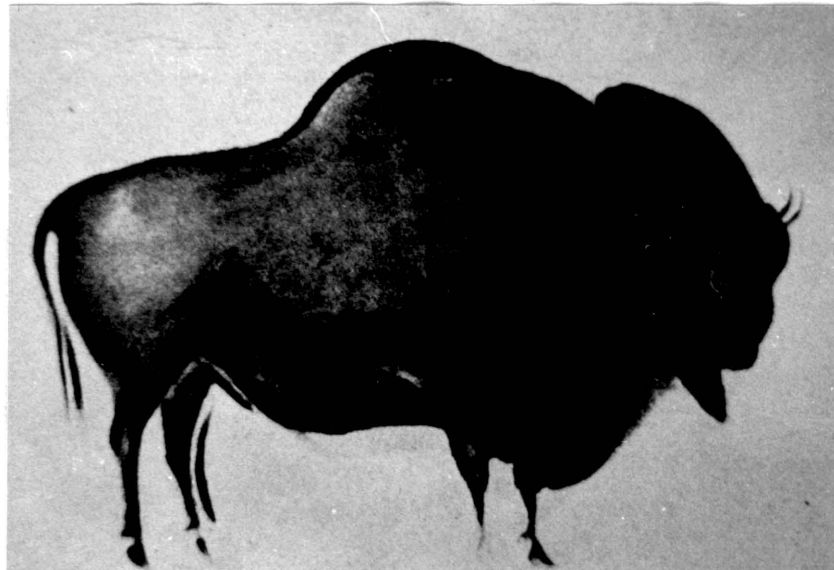


Fig. 18  
Prehistoric Drawing of Bison  
N.D.

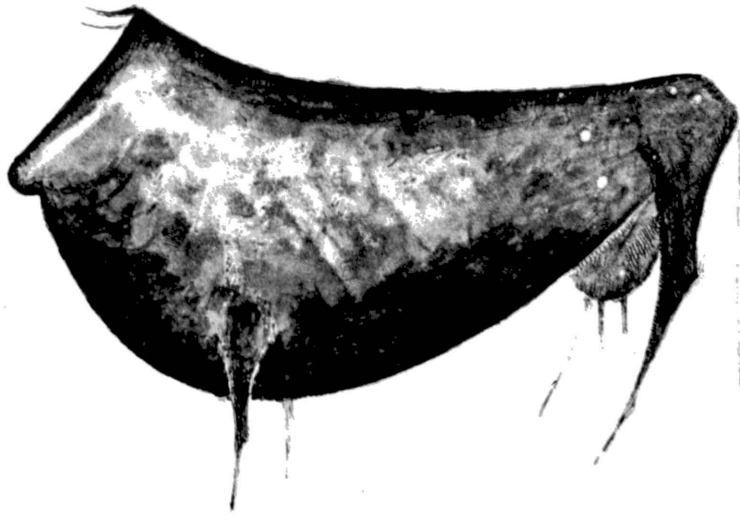


Fig. 19  
NADELMAN, Cow, 1914, Pen, Brush, Ink Drawing.



Fig. 20  
NADELMAN, Bull, 1915, Bronze.

After 1915, Nadelman worked intensively, preparing for his American debut which was arranged in February, 1917, at the galleries of Scott & Fowles on Fifth Avenue. Birnbaum, being a master of publicity, had not only sold a number of important works before the opening of the exhibition, but had also been responsible for an elaborate catalogue to supplement the show.<sup>40</sup> The exhibition, containing sculptures in bronze, wood and marble, relief plaques, and drawings, was a vast success and was all but sold out. The press for exhibition at Scott & Fowles established Nadelman as a leading figure. Henry McBride, of The New York Sun, praised the earlier Stieglitz show, and now defined his general impression of Nadelman as an artist:

It is, in a word, refined. It is in the highest degree, a before-the-war art. It is culture to the breaking point . . . It seems to breathe out all the rare essences that were brought by the wise men from all the corners of the earth to be fused by the Parisians . . . into the residuum called 'modern civilization' which now, so many millions are dying for . . . In this sculpture, the past and present are blended, almost cruelly.<sup>41</sup>

The blending of the past and present was most evident in the exhibition at Scott & Fowles in the Nadelman sculpture of Female Nude (Fig. 21) of 1916. Nadelman's taste for grace and softness of the undraped female figure becomes definite. The delicate modulations of the ideal female form are rendered with fine appreciation.<sup>42</sup> The same appreciation and beauty is found

in the Aphrodite From Cyrene (Fig. 33) of the fourth century, B.C. There is harmony of line, a poise and relaxation found in the Greek sculpture that is also contained in the Nadelman work. The modeling shows a complete understanding of the female form. It is here that Nadelman's struggles with the representation of the human figure find their consummation.

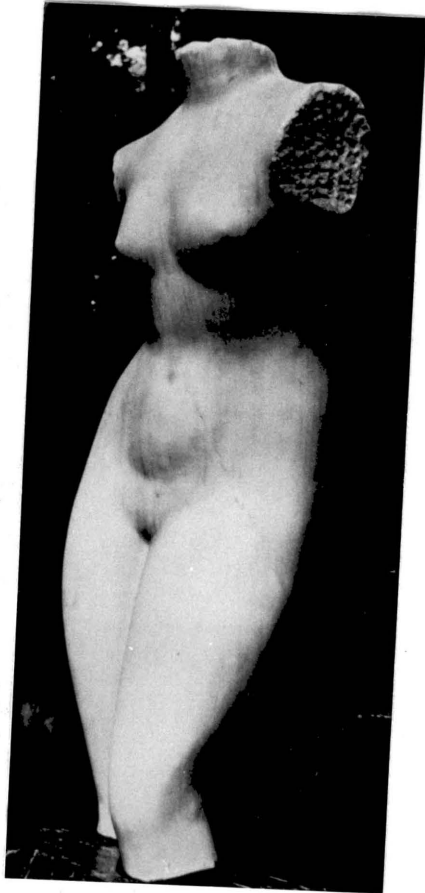


Fig. 21  
NADELMAN, Female Nude,  
1916, Marble.

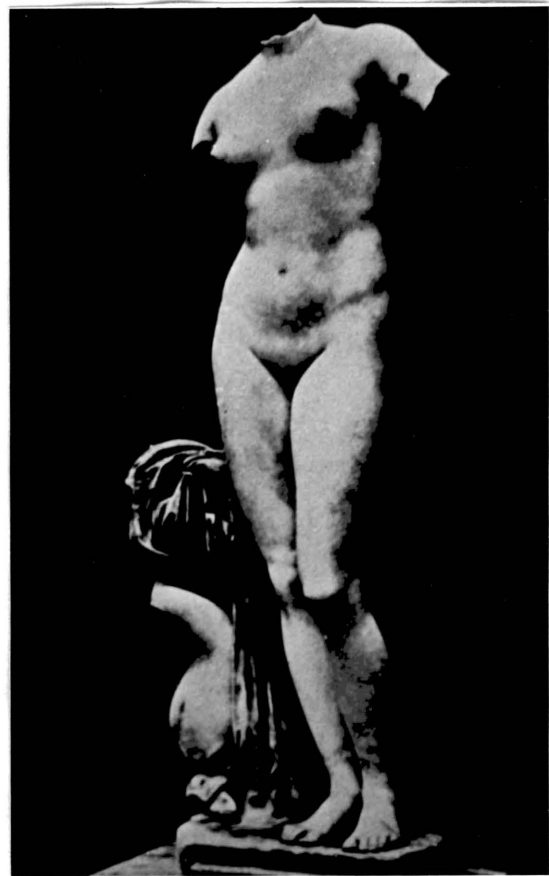


Fig. 22  
Aphrodite From Cyrene,  
ca. Fourth Century, B.C.,  
Marble.

Nadelman's Male Head (Fig. 23) of 1916, shows a debt to Hellenists of the Fourth Century, B.C. The male profile shows a continuous line through forehead and nose, with only a slight indentation of the lower forehead, the oblique brows and deep-set eyes, creating a strong shadow, which can also be viewed in the Head of Agias (Fig. 24).

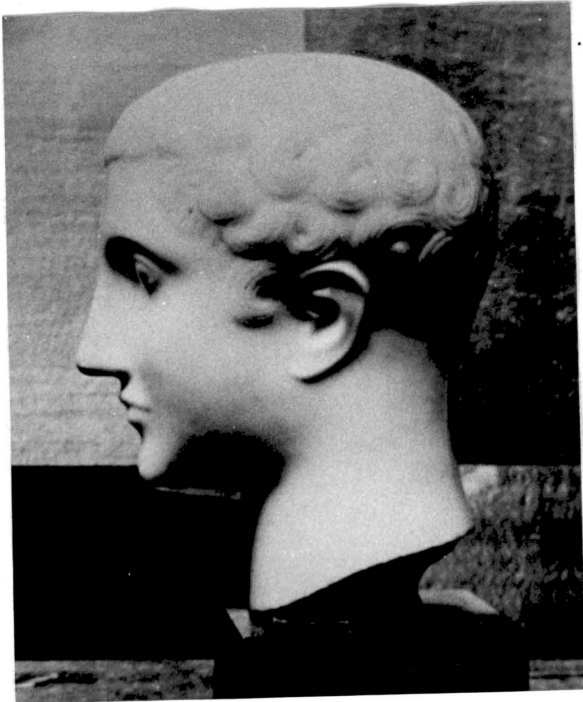


Fig. 23  
NADELMAN, Male Head, 1916,  
Marble.

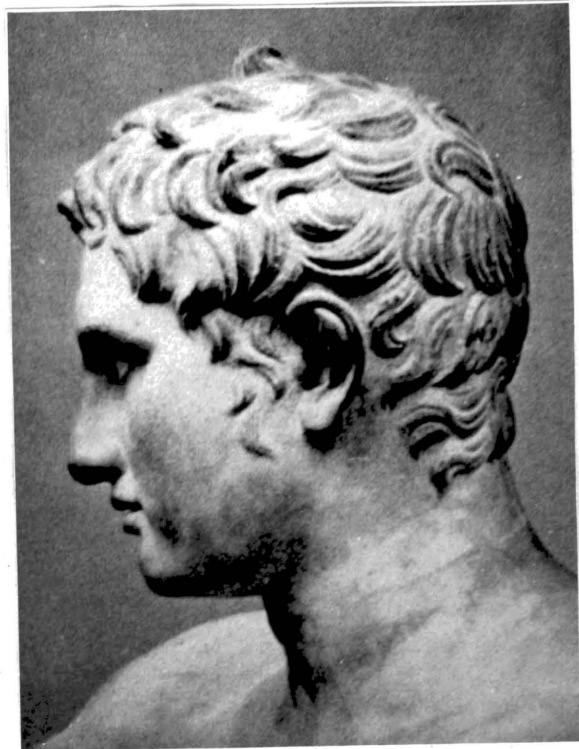


Fig. 24  
Head of Agias, ca. Fourth  
Century, B.C., Marble.

Both examples exhibit an expression that is intense. The Greek serenity and aloofness, that is true of the majority of fourth century Greek sculpture, is present in the Nadelman.<sup>43</sup> The stylization of hair is most noticeable in both works in its pattern and curl, with the Nadelman sculpture perhaps being more reductive in the depth of carving.

By 1918, Nadelman was a vital force in the artistic and sculptural life of New York. As a member of the "high Bohemia," so admirably depicted in the early novels of Carl Van Vechten, and also a member of the Penguin Club, whose annual banquet menus were etched by Jules Pascin; he lived the part aptly. At this time, Nadelman was so swamped with commissions that he installed himself in a functioning studio-shop, apropos Rodin. He sent for Albert Boni, his faithful praticien from Paris, and at one time he employed three assistants.<sup>44</sup>

Nadelman became a friend of the painters Gary Melchers, George Bellows, and Eugene Speicher,<sup>45</sup> and the cartoonist, Alfred Frueh. Particularly, he knew intimately, the sculptors George Grey Barnard, Macmonies, Manship, and Mahonri Young, and also collector Edmund Quinn. He had particular respect for sculptors whom he considered good craftsmen. He seldom questioned the quality of talent, if skill were present.<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Hayes Miller, respected master of many American painters, once said to him at an opening of an exhibition, "You know, Nadel-

man, we all go by what you do."<sup>47</sup>

In 1919, Nadelman married Mrs. Joseph A. Flannery. He, well off financially now, and she, a widow of considerable means, purchased Alderbrook, the old Percy Pyne estate at Riverdale-on-Hudson. Nadelman began forming a huge collection of American folk art, that was to become the finest in America.

From October 27 to November 8, 1918, Nadelman exhibited at M. Knoedler & Co. in New York. The exhibition of sixteen sculptures and forty drawings was not well received, but it did exhibit the transition in Nadelman's work from the Hellenic inspiration of the past to the folk inspiration that was to influence his future work. Figures that would primarily be devoted to creating a world, derived from figures of society that he observed daily.

The complete record of the amount of work Nadelman was to produce in the remaining years of his life (up until 1946) is immense. It is obvious, as seen in the examples discussed, that from the beginning of his career in 1900 until about 1920, Nadelman used Classical and Hellenistic Greek sculpture as his source of inspiration. Although the early works of Elie Nadelman are still relatively unknown, they are curiously open to inspection, comment, and comparison.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>John H. I. Baur, The Sculpture and Drawings of Elie Nadelman, New York: Whitney Museum of Modern Art, 1975, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Lincoln Kirstein, The Drawings of Elie Nadelman, New York: Hacker Books, 1970, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>6</sup>Lincoln Kirstein, The Sculpture of Elie Nadelman, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1948, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Kirstein, The Drawings of Elie Nadelman, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Frederick A. King, "A Hellenist Sculptor Driven Here By the War," Literary Digest, March 1917, pp. 550-1.

<sup>11</sup>Kirstein, The Drawings of Elie Nadelman, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>16</sup>Nadelman had always admired Rodin and was accepted as an expert of his drawings. After 1913, with the exception of portraits, Nadelman used no models.

<sup>17</sup>Kirstein, The Drawings of Elie Nadelman, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup>Baur, The Sculpture and Drawings of Elie Nadelman, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup>Kirstein, The Drawings of Elie Nadelman, p. 17.



- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 17.
- <sup>21</sup>Kirstein, The Sculpture of Elie Nadelman, pp. 11-12.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-13.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 14.
- <sup>24</sup>Athena T. Spear, "Multiple Styles of Elie Nadelman: Drawings and Figure Sculpture," Oberlin, Ohio: Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin 31-1, 1973-74, pp. 34-58.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 36.
- <sup>26</sup>Athena T. Spear, "Elie Nadelman's Early Heads, 1905-1911," Oberlin, Ohio: Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin 28-3, Spring, 1971, pp. 201-22.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 202.
- <sup>28</sup>Camera Work 32 (October 1910) p. 41.
- <sup>29</sup>Kirstein, The Sculpture of Elie Nadelman, p. 15. This was the first time that the term, "significant form," was used in modern art (before Clive Bell made it popular).
- <sup>30</sup>Spear, "Elie Nadelman's Early Heads, 1905-1911," p. 222.
- <sup>31</sup>Kirstein, The Sculpture of Elie Nadelman, p. 26.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>35</sup>Andre' Salmon, "Elie Nadelman," L'Art Decoratif 31 (March 1914): pp. 107-14.
- <sup>36</sup>Kirstein, The Sculpture of Elie Nadelman, p. 28.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 33.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 34.
- <sup>39</sup>Baur, The Sculpture and Drawings of Elie Nadelman, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup>Kirstein, The Sculpture of Elie Nadelman, p. 34.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>42</sup>Gisela M. A. Richter, The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950, p. 59.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>44</sup>Besides Boni, there were the Italians, Ferdinand Terenzoni and Jules Gargani.

<sup>45</sup>Nadelman was Speicher's sponsor when he became an American citizen.

<sup>46</sup>Kirstein, The Sculpture of Elie Nadelman, p. 46.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

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